



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

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STUDENTS CELEBRATE ARBOR DAY BY PLANTING TREES ON MINED LAND

Wise, VA – On April 13, 2007, over 100 secondary school students from Wise and Dickenson Counties celebrated Arbor Day by planting trees on mined land adjacent to the Powell River Project (PRP) Research and Education Center in Wise County, Virginia. The tree planting took place on an abandoned mine land project that is being reclaimed through a partnership between the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) and Red River Coal Company. The students planted over 1000 trees, including oaks, ash, and blight resistant American chestnuts.

State and federal officials also introduced students to the latest research on establishing valuable and productive forests on mined lands. High schools participating in the project included Powell Valley, Appalachia, J.J. Kelly, Pound, Coeburn, St. Paul, and Clintwood.

“We had over twenty groups of students planting trees in the morning and after lunch,” stated DMME Director George “Bo” Willis. “This was our third Arbor Day celebration and we had great support from the industry and schools from throughout Wise and Dickenson Counties. The students did excellent work in planting the trees in accordance with the research from Virginia Tech.”

The Arbor Day celebration is an event of the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI), a partnership to promote reforestation on permitted coal mines and abandoned coal mine sites. Sponsors of the event included the DMME, the federal Office of Surface Mining, the Virginia Department of Forestry, and Virginia Tech’s Powell River Project. Director Willis added, “In addition to being an enjoyable outdoor experience for the students, Arbor Day activities also emphasize Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs). Virginia Tech faculty and DMME personnel give presentations that directly relate to secondary school SOLs for biology and earth science. We hope that Arbor Day activities will encourage the students to consider a career in natural resources management.”

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During the event, DMME recognized Paramount Coal of Virginia, LLC and Red River Coal Company for their achievements with reforestation. Paramount won the ARRI award for excellence in reforestation of an active mine. This company has implemented the forestry reclamation approach to establish a diverse young forest on its Black Bear #4 Surface Mine. Red River Coal won the ARRI award for abandoned mine land (AML) reclamation through its implementation of the forestry reclamation approach on an AML project in Wise County, Virginia. Also during the Arbor Day celebration, DMME recognized Roger Shortt of Cumberland Resources, LLC for individual excellence in reclamation.

“Over eighty percent of Virginia’s coal mine land is reclaimed to a post-mining land use of forest,” Director Willis stated. “To ensure that current and future generations realize the environmental and economic benefits of reforestation, it is important that agencies promote the ARRI to the industry and those who will follow us.”



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